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Associations do matter for social capital, in terms of “linking social capital”.

Lars Torpe

Introduction

The idea of this paper is to assess or rather to reassess the role of voluntary association for social capital and democracy. In many years the positive role of voluntary associations for democracy and social capital was taken for almost granted. From Almond & Verba (1963) to Putnam (1993) the hypothesis of a positive effect of associational involvement on civiness was confirmed. However, in later years a number of studies have questioned this role (Delhey & Newton, 2005; Stolle, 2003; van Deth et.al., 2007). A major study thus concludes: “It is therefore difficult to escape the conclusion that the faith placed in associational and other forms of social involvement as a prime engine for the realization of democratic citizenship is stronger than the empirical evidence warrants.” (Montero, Westholm & van Deth, 2007:437).

Consequently, in the debate on the sources of social capital more attention has been paid to factors such as the structure and performance of political institutions and the welfare state (Kumlin & Rothstein, 2005; Freitag, 2006), religion and ethnic homogeneity (Delhey & Newton, 2003) and the family (Uslaner, 2002; Stolle, 2003). Often Neo Tocquevillian ideas of civil society interaction stressing the role of voluntary associations have been confronted with an institutional approach stressing the role of the state. This is not accidental, because in most studies, where voluntary associations have been in focus, it is the so called internal effects of associations that have been investigated. Warren (2001) calls such effects for the “developmental effects on individuals”. In this perspective social interactions within associations have civilizing effects on individuals in terms of trust, civic norms and democratic competences. These effects are seen as important not only for the individual but also for the political culture of a nation.

Mostly the presumed “developmental effects” have been investigated by looking at correlations between on the one hand membership and activity in associations and on the other social trust and sometimes also some other civic attitudes variables (Denters et.al., 2007). However, with regard to memberships it should not come as a surprise that the relationships are weak or non existent. In

many countries most memberships are passive. Such measurements are therefore hardly able to test the neo-Tocquevillian hypotheses, simply because it is the effects of social interaction that is underlined in this approach.

Contrary, member activity, for example voluntary work, seems to be a more adequate proxy for social interaction in associations. However, as pointed out by Putnam and others, one cannot be sure of the kind of social capital that comes out of activity within associations (Putnam, 2000).

Sometimes social capital takes the form of “bonding social capital”, and even if such capital is not necessarily bad for democracy, neither does it play a role in the “bridging” between groups who know of themselves to be unlike. Therefore, activity in associations could both contribute to strengthening and to weaken a civic community dependent of the character of social capital that is generated.

But the effects of activity in associations could also just turn out to be weak, because associational involvement is not that important for social capital and for democratic education than was the case 100 years ago. At that time many associations were guided by a democratic spirit, mainly in the Northern part of Europe and in the US. In these places they were more democratic than the surroundings, so to speak. One can therefore easily imagine that they played an important role as “schools of democracy”. To-day, hardly no one questions the principles of liberal democracy and furthermore, ideas of democracy have now penetrated important institutions as the family, the school etc (Gundelach & Torpe, 1997). Therefore, socialising to democracy takes place long before people are actively involved in associations. Still, the idea of associations as “schools of democracy” remains to have an important place at the research agenda.

The development effect is, however, not the only possible democratic effect voluntary associations could have. Warren, for instance, mentions two other effects that are more often overlooked, namely “public sphere effects” and “institutional effects”. While the first one can be seen as the role of associations for “forming opinions and developing agendas outside the state (Warren, 2001:77), the second one is associated with the effects of associations on public decision-making and implementation. In both cases associations are seen as intermediary structures between on the one hand individuals and on the other hand the institutions of collective decision-making. Even if such role, particular in terms of collective decision-making, is well described, the meaning of its role for

democracy and possibly also for social capital is often neglected. One obvious reason is that social capital is described as a phenomenon that develops in the horizontal relations between citizens in civil society and not in the vertical relations between the citizens and the political structures of society.

This is, however, an unfortunate limitation. In Putnam's terminology social capital should be seen as social trust, norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement "that improves the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinating actions" (Putnam, 1993: 167). Marshall and Stolle capture the essence of social capital very well when defining it as "tapping the potential willingness of citizens both to cooperate with each other and to engage in civic endeavours collectively" (Marshall & Stolle, 2004: 125). However, the potential willingness of citizens should not be restricted to cooperation inside or between organizations. Members of associations are in numerous ways also actors in the political public just as they are users, clients and employees in relation to the local and central institutions of the state. If social capital is to be understood as "the potential willingness to cooperate with each other", we should not only look at how different parts of civil society are connected, but also how civil society connects to the political structures of society. We shall therefore introduce the term "linking" social capital. While "bridging" social capital can be described as the potential willingness to cooperate along the horizontal lines of society i.e. between citizens, "linking" social capital can be seen as the potential willingness to cooperate along the vertical lines of society, i.e. between citizens and the political institutions.

The concept of linking social capital was first used to describe connections with people on different levels of power. Contrary to "bonding" and "bridging" social capital "linking" social capital is thus concerned with relations between people who are not on an equal footing (Szreter, 2002; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). In this context linking social capital is seen as the form of capital that emerges in the relation between state-actors and civil society actors, for example actors of voluntary associations. Linking social capital can thus be seen as the potential willingness of citizens both to cooperate with each other and to engage in civic endeavours collectively *along the vertical lines of society*.

The elements that according to Putnam play a key-role in "bridging" and "bonding" social capital, trust, norms and networks, can also be seen to play a key-role in "linking" social capital. While

social trust is important for the potential willingness of citizens to cooperate along the horizontal lines of society, trust does also play an important role for the decisions to cooperate along the vertical lines of society; however, not in terms of social trust but in terms of political trust. Representatives of civil society, for instance from voluntary associations, are of-course more willing to cooperate with political authorities if they trust them than if the opposite is the case. And if civil society actors trust political institutions, it is also more likely that generalized norms of reciprocity will emerge. In this context norms of reciprocity means the mutual expectations that a benefit granted now is to be repaid in the future and the expression “generalized” refers to a “continuing relationship of exchange that is at any given time unrequited or imbalanced” (Putnam, 1993: 172). An example of a generalized norm of reciprocity that emerges in the relationship between state and civil society is a norm saying that one ought to pay the tax one is obliged to: You pay tax expecting some future benefits, however not necessarily in a balanced way.

Furthermore, in linking social capital networks are to be seen as networks along the vertical lines of society. Such networks may have a formal and an informal character and they may even be virtual networks or communities (Castells, 2001). To the extent that they connect civil society actors with state actors they form different parts of what we call the political public. “Linking” social capital is thus created when civil society actors are present in the political public.

Finally, we introduce a new element in “linking” social capital, which have no parallel in “bridging” and “bonding” social capital, namely political efficacy. This fourth element of linking social capital is particular connected to what was mentioned above that linking social capital is concerned with relations between people who possess different power resources. And this is the case when the individual citizen confronts the representatives of political institutions. It is therefore important that citizens feel that they are listened to, and that they “have a say”. If not it will weaken their incentive to cooperate. Together with political trust and norms, political efficacy is a dimension of political integration. Often a distinction is made between internal efficacy and external efficacy, where internal efficacy conceptualize the feeling of ones own ability to “make a difference” and external efficacy conceptualize the perceived responsiveness of the system.

We can thus make a distinction between two forms of linking social capital. The first form is generated by the presence of civil society actors in the political public, and the second form is

generated by values of political integration determined by three dimensions of political integration, namely political trust, norms and efficacy. The stock of linking social capital thus varies with the extent to which citizens take active part in public life and correspondingly hold political integrationist values. Linking social is thus not only a matter of public engagement, but also a matter of how citizens are oriented towards the political institutions of society. As such linking social capital comes close to what is in the tradition of Almond and Verba (1963) is understood as the political culture of a nation. (evt. en note om Putnam)

In examining the role of voluntary associations for linking social capital two questions are therefore important:

1. How much space do associational actors occupy of the political public?
2. How are associational actors integrated in political life in terms of having feelings of political efficacy, trust and norms?

The associational actors we are interested in is he or she who is engaged in the development of the organizational activities of the association and who in this capacity is able to play a mediating role between the private and the public institutions of society. Most members of associations are passive, volunteers or only active in the sense that they now and then participate in a meeting. A few members can, however, be called associational activists in terms of being active in the development of the organizational activities of the association. This is the group we will be specially interested in as the group of actors who has the potentials of being able to play a mediating role in relation to public institutions. The degree to which such a role is actually carried out depends of firstly the degree to which this group is present in the political public and secondly the degree to which this group are integrated in public life.

We shall look at this role in a comparative political perspective. To see if and how there are variations in the role of associational activists for creating linking social capital and to have an idea of the degree to which such variations could be explained by different traditions and different institutional framing of state-civil-society relations. It is for instance obvious to assume that state policies toward the voluntary sector play a role, that it matters whether associations are supported

by public authorities and invited to have a say on public affairs, or associations are neglected or even counteracted by public authorities.

We shall proceed by looking first at the degree to which associational activists are present in the political public in different European countries. Next we highlight how this group is integrated in political life compared with similar groups. This is also done for a number of European countries. In continuation of this we construct an integrating measure of the impact of associations for creating linking social capital. Finally, we highlight the relation between linking social capital and bridging social capital in terms of social trust.

Measurement and data

The data used for this examination comes from the project of Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy (CID) in which population surveys were carried out in 13 European countries between 2000 and 2002 (van Deth et.al. 2007). This data-material provides detailed information on associational involvement. Associational activists are in this context defined as members who have participated in decisions at a meeting in an associations and who have done at least one of the following: Planned or chaired a meeting in an association, prepared or gave a speech before a meeting or wrote a text other than a private letter at least a few pages long.

By being engaged in the political public we understand that he/she both 1) is oriented toward public life by following politics in newspapers and TV on a daily basis, 2) discuss public issues often or now and then and 3) actively tries to influence public policy through one or more channels.

Finally, efficacy is measured as both internal and external efficacy, civic norms are measured as what it means to be good citizen on several dimensions and political trust is measured as the degree of trust in several political institutions.

The exact operationalization is shown in Appendix A.

Organizational activists in the political public.

Associations can be seen as a pool of activists from which those who are active in the political public are recruited. As shown (table 1) there are considerable variations between the countries with regard to the size of this pool. The number of organizational activists varies from 32 percent of the population in Denmark to 6 percent of the population in Moldova and Rumania. About 1/3 of the Danish population is thus to be called associational activists in terms of being actively involved in the organization of activities in at least one association, while the same is only the case for 6 percent of the population in Rumania.

Also the number of persons who are engaged in the political public understood as those who follow politics in newspapers and TV on a daily basis, who discuss public issues and who have attempted to influence public policy varies between the countries. Norway has the most political active population with more than half of the population engaged in public, while Rumania has the least political passive population with only 13 percent engaged in public.

Table 1. Associational activists, and the representation of associational activists in the political public. Percentages

	Associational activists in population	Persons engaged in the political public	The proportion of associational activists in public by the whole political public
Switzerland	25	33	35
Russia	7	16	22
Portugal	11	16	35
Denmark	32	49	40
W-Germany	14	24	26
E-Germany	9	28	22
Netherlands	27	51	34
Slovenia	8	21	13
Norway	29	56	37
Romania	6	13	22
Moldova	8	15	22
Spain	9	23	21
Sweden	24	42	32
Total	17	31	31

As can be observed the order is almost the same in the two first columns. Denmark, Norway, The Netherlands, Switzerland and Sweden have the biggest proportion of associational activists and the same countries have the most political active population. In the other end Rumania, Russia,

Moldova, Slovenia, East Germany and Spain have lowest proportion of associational activists and the same countries have the least political active population with the exception of East Germany that change seats with Portugal.

One could, however, easily imagine a different picture with regard to the main question, namely how much space associational activists occupy of the political public. But as appears in column four, it is not the case. With the exception of Portugal, those countries that have the highest proportion of organizational activists and most people engaged in public affairs are also the countries, in which organizational activists take up most space in the political public.

Now, to play a role as mediators between the private and the public it is not enough that associational activists are present in the public. They must also, at least to the same degree as the population as a whole, express positive values of political integration. The end of the Weimar republic in the 1930's is a well known and infamous example of how the combination of many activists present in public expressing negative values of political integration can be a dangerous cocktail. The degree to which associational activists play a positive role in the generation of linking social capital can thus be seen as the combination of firstly their presence in the political public and secondly the degree to which they express positive political integrationist values.

Associational activists in public and political integrative values

Table 2 shows the relationships between on the one hand three separate groups and on the other four dimensions of political integration, namely internal and external efficacy plus political trust and civic norms.

The first group is the organizational activists, who are not active in the political public. The second group is the organizational activists, who are also present in the political public. The third group is the persons who are involved in the political public without being involved in associations as associational activists. The purpose of comparing these groups should be seen as an attempt to isolate the impact of the specific combination of being both engaged in associations and in public.

Table 2. Correlations between different forms of organizational and political involvement and dimensions of political integration (scales from 0-100).

		Internal efficacy		External		Political trust		Civic norms		N
		Bivar	Ctr	Bivar	Ctr	Bivar	Ctr	Bivar	Ctr	
Switzerland	Associational activists	ns		ns		ns		ns		287
	Ass. activists in public	19	16	10	10	5	4	7	7	252
	Persons active in public	ns		ns		ns		3	2*	446
Russia	Associational activists	7*	ns	ns		ns		ns		58
	Ass. activists in public	22	17	7	7	ns		9	9	63
	Persons active in public	6	ns	ns		ns		4	4	222
Portugal	Associational activists	ns		ns		ns		ns		59
	Ass. activists in public	18	15	18	18	7	7	8	8	55
	Persons active in public	7	6*	5*	ns	ns		3*	ns	102
Denmark	Associational activists	ns		ns		ns		ns		194
	Ass. activists in public	16	14	9	8	6	5	5	5	327
	Persons active in public	ns		ns		ns		ns		474
W-Germany	Associational activists	6	5	8	8	ns		ns		155
	Ass. activists in public	11	9	8	7	4	4	11	11	130
	Persons active in public	4	ns	ns		ns		6	6	343
E-Germany	Associational activists	ns		ns		ns		9	10	31
	Ass. activists in public	18	17	12	11	ns		15	11	63
	Persons active in public	4*	ns	ns		ns		5	4	225
Netherlands	Associational activists	ns		-4*	-5*	ns		ns		151
	Ass. activists in public	9	7	6	5	4	3	6	5	295
	Persons active in public	ns		ns		ns		1*	ns	537
Slovenia	Associational activists	ns		ns		-8*	-7*	ns		50
	Ass. activists in public	16	13	12	10	8*	8*	ns		29
	Persons active in public	7	6	ns		7	6	3	ns	175
Norway	Associational activists	ns		ns		ns		ns		181
	Ass. activists in public	14	11	10	9	5	4	6	5	485
	Persons active in public	ns		ns		ns		ns		807
Romania	Associational activists	14	14	9*	8*	ns		10	7	42
	Ass. activists in public	13	13	14	13	11	11	12	9	35
	Persons active in public	6	7	9	9	8	8	6	5	122
Moldova	Associational activists	ns		ns		ns		ns		58
	Ass. activists in public	16	14	14	14	8*	8*	9	9	40
	Persons active in public	7	6	6	6	5*	5*	6	6	139
Spain	Associational activists	4	ns	ns		ns		3*	3*	164
	Ass. activists in public	14	10	9	6	3	3*	7	8	206
	Persons active in public	8	6	6	5	3*	2*	4	4	765
Sweden	Associational activists	ns		ns		ns		ns		139
	Ass. activists in public	17	14	8	6	6	4	5	5	171
	Persons active in public	ns		4	ns	ns		2*	ns	364

Entries are unstandardised coefficients from linear regression

Ctr.: Gender, age and level of education

* correlation significant at the 0,05 level. Otherwise correlation significant at the 0,01 level

ns = non significant

There are several observations and conclusions to be drawn from table 2. First and all, we observe that in all countries there are positive relationships between on the one hand being an associational activist present in the political public and the dimensions of political integration. The first conclusion is thus that political integration is strengthening by the presence of associational activists in the political public. We also observe that generally it is only the combination of being both involved in associational life and in public life that has an effect, while there is no or only little effect of being only active in associations or active in public. This picture is most pronounced for

the Scandinavian countries, where the distribution is remarkable similar, but also for Switzerland and the Netherlands. Only Romania and to some extent Spain and Moldova deviates from this picture. The second conclusion is thus that it is not associational activity or public engagement as such that matters for political integration but exactly the combination of associational activism and public engagement. An advice is therefore that to strengthen political integration and build linking social capital conditions should be improved for an increased access of associational activists to the political public. One way of doing this could be to strengthen institutional cooperation between state and civil society.

Conclusion

Who are rich and poor on linking social capital?

Connections between the private and the public can be build

Two factors are thus important for the contribution of associations to linking social capital. Firstly, how much associational activists occupy of the political public? Secondly, how strongly associational activists express political integrationist values in terms of being political efficacious, feeling trust towards political institutions and expressing norms of good citizenship? To get an idea of how associations contribute to create linking social capital we can combine the two factors. An indicator of the net effect would thus be the proportion of associational activists in public multiplied with the difference between the scores of associational activists in public and other members of public on the four indexes of political integration. This is done in table 3 where a mean score is calculated for political integration. The result is shown for each country in column 3 with the ranking in the parenthesis.

Table 3. The impact of associations for generating social capital. Index.

	The proportion of associational activists in public by the whole	Mean score of associational activists who are also active in	Mean score of public activists who are not associational	Index of the impact of associations for generating linking social capital (0-
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	political public	public on political integration (0-1)	activists on political integration	100)
Switzerland	35	58	51	245 (5)
Russia	22	45	37	176 (6)
Portugal	35	56	48	280 (1)
Denmark	40	66	59	280 (1)
W-Germany	26	59	53	156 (8)
E-Germany	22	55	47	176 (6)
Netherlands	34	64	60	136 (9)
Slovenia	13	57	52	65 (13)
Norway	37	57	50	259 (3)
Romania	22	56	51	110 (11)
Moldova	22	52	46	132 (10)
Spain	21	53	49	84 (12)
Sweden	32	63	57	192 (4)

As can be seen associations have the greatest impact for linking social capital in Denmark and Portugal followed by the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Portugal. In the other end and somewhat behind we find Slovenia, Russia, Moldova, Spain, East Germany and Rumania. The most striking is that we find all the East-European countries at the bottom end. Not only do these countries have a weak civil society in terms of voluntary associations. The representatives of these associations are not to the same degree as in North and Western Europe present in public.

Is linking social capital related to bridging social capital? And do organizational activists, who are present in public, play a role for social trust?

At the individual level there are rather strong relationships between the dimensions of political integration and social trust with regard to institutional trust (0,32), responsiveness (0,30) and efficacy (0,28) while the relationships are more modest with regard to civic norms (0,16) and organizational activists who are present in public (0,17). The coefficients are only reduced marginal when controlled for age, gender and level of education.

A regression model that has social trust as the dependent variable and the dimensions of political integration and organizational activists present in public as the independent variables shows that organizational activists involved in the political public have greater social trust than others, but the coefficient is weak compared to political trust. The result supports the assumption that confidence

in political institutions plays a greater role for social trust than being involved in associational activity.

One could, however, imagine that the effect of being involved both in associations and the political public will vary from country to country dependent of the institutional framing of the relationship between civil society and the state. More precisely, one could assume a spill-over effect in countries with strong traditions for active collaboration between voluntary associations and the state. The hypothesis is only partly supported. In Denmark, The Netherlands and Sweden there is an effect, but also in the former BRD and in Spain. In Moldova, Rumania, Russia, the former DDR and Portugal there is no effect, but neither in Switzerland nor Norway.

At the country level we can see that this is somehow the same countries where organizational activists means most for linking social capital and social trust is high (table 3).

Conclusion

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Appendix A.

This is operationalized as follows:

- every day read the political content of a newspaper, listen to or watch news programmes on radio or TV or listen or watch other programmes about politics and social affairs on radio and TV
- often or sometimes discuss political matters with others
- with the purpose of bringing about improvement or counteract deterioration in society been involved in at least one of the following political activities within the last 12 month:
 - contacted a politician
 - contacted a civil servant on the national, regional or local level
 - worked in a political party
 - worked in a political action group
 - worn or displayed campaign badge/sticker
 - signed a petition
 - taken part in a public demonstration
 - taken part in a strike
 - boycotted certain products
 - deliberately bought certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons
 - donated money
 - raised funds
 - contacted or appeared in the media
 - contacted solicitor or juridical body
 - participated in illegal protest activities
 - attended a political meeting or rally

Political integration is measured on four indexes. The first one is *institutional trust* understood as trust in the municipal board, the cabinet, the political parties, the parliament, the courts, the civil service, the police and the politicians (Cronbach's alpha: 0,91). The second one is responsiveness understood a) as the degree to which respondents think ordinary people have possibilities to present their opinions to politicians and b) the degree to which respondents think politicians attach weight to opinions presented to them by ordinary people (Cronbach's alpha: 0,63). The third index is *efficacy* understood as a) the degree to which the respondents think they have greater or smaller

possibilities than others to present their opinions to politicians and b) the degree to which respondents think that they have greater or smaller possibilities than others to make politicians take account of their opinions (Cronbach's alpha: 0,82). The fourth one is an index of *civic norms* understood as the respondents opinion of how important the following is: To show solidarity with people who are worse off than yourself, to vote in public elections, never to try to evade taxes, always to obey laws and regulations, to be active in organizations, to think of others more than yourself and to subject your own opinions to critical examination (Cronbach's alpha: 0,72).

While the potential willingness to cooperate

In this context we put focus on one side of the relationship between voluntary associations and the state

What I will focus on in this context is the role of associations for linking social capital.

Broadly the potential willingness to cooperate can I accordance with bridging and bonding social capital be determined as trust, norms and networks that connect the different parts. However, the relevant category is in this context political trust, not social trust, just as networks should not be seen as horizontal networks, but as vertical networks that connect citizens with political institutions, i.e. policy networks. Furthermore,

Two more words should be said about “generalized norms of reciprocity”. In social capital theory they refer to “a continuing relationship of exchange that is at any given time unrequited or imbalanced, but that involves mutual expectations that benefit granted now should be repaid in the future” (Putnam, 1993:172). Most often in investigations of social capital this element of the definition is not brought in, presumably because it is difficult to operationalize.

Putnam has himself given an example of how such norms of reciprocity may facilitate collective action (Putnam, 1993: 171). He asks: How come that I spend a cold autumn Saturday afternoon raking my yard free of leaves in stead of staying inside watching football in TV. The answer is that he does, because it has become a norm in his neighbourhood rake the leaves. A collective solution is thus reached, where you could be tempted to let the wind solve the problem for one self.

It is easy to see how such norms of reciprocity promote common action in smaller communities. But, how can we understand norms of reciprocity in the large community of citizens? What character do these norms have? Democratic communities are constituted on some basic rights and

duties and some basic procedures for common decision-making and the exercise of authority. Behind these we find a principle of reciprocity, namely the mutual accept that everyone is equally included in the community (Rawls, 1993; Gutman & Thompson, 1996).

Accordingly, a norm of reciprocity prescribes that one follows the rules conditioning by that all gain the same advantage. Consequently, the norm of reciprocity may be weakened ...

En reciprocitetsnorm vil følgelig tilsige, at man overholder rettigheder og pligter og følger de foreskrevne procedurer under den forudsætning, at alle drager samme fordele heraf. Hermed er også sagt, at reciprocitetsnormen vil kunne svækkes, hvis man føler sig forfordelt i tildelingen af rettigheder og pligter eller tilsidesat, når det drejer sig om muligheden for at gøre sin indflydelse gældende.

Parallelt hermed følger forestillingen om et gensidigt relationsforhold mellem rettigheder og pligter. Med til retten til individuel autonomi hører eksempelvis forpligtelsen til at respektere andres ret. Med til retten til at nyde af fællesskabets goder, f.eks. i form af offentlig service, hører forpligtelsen til at yde til fællesskabet, f.eks. via skatten.

was (a footnote about the origin of the concept “linking social capital” (Woolcock) and how I use the concept compared to how it is used by Woolcock and Szreter).

Networks, trust and norms can also be seen as key-elements in linking social capital. However, the content is different than bridging social capital. In linking social capital it is not social trust, but political trust that is the relevant category. And instead of horizontal networks among citizens, we should look at vertical networks that connect citizens with political institutions, i.e. various policy

networks. Contrary, norms of reciprocity can have the same character in bridging and linking social capital. While norms of reciprocity in bonding social capital is connected to particular communities, for instance local communities, the family, particular associations and even the nation state, norms of reciprocity are in bridging and linking social capital connected to overlapping communities, i.e. communities in which individuals and groups know of themselves to be unlike. The political community of citizens is of particular relevance for linking social capital. Norms of reciprocity can here be understood as civic norms that express the potential willingness of citizens to cooperate and to engage in civic endeavours collectively. Such norms can be operationalized as what it means to be a good citizen, for instance to vote in public elections, to obey the laws and to respect the rights of others.

However, in linking social capital a further element should be introduced, namely civic competences. Parallel with norms and trust such competences can be seen as expressions of the degree to which one feels connected to the political structures of society. Together political trust, policy networks, civic norms and political efficacy can be seen as forming the key elements in a concept of linking social capital. The question is then: What is the role of voluntary associations for building linking social capital understood in that way?

The degree to which this is actually done is seen as

We can call those who are engaged in the development of organizational activities for associational activists. To be an associational activist means more than just attending a meeting

This puts focus on those members of associations who can be called associational activists are both active in associations and in public politics; in other words, those who take part in the development of organizational activities in associations and at the same time are integrated in various policy networks. We should, however, not limit ourselves to formal memberships of such networks. It is enough to be engaged in public politics one way or another.

One can of-course be more or less engaged in organizational activities. In this context we will see the organizational activists as those who besides attending a meeting, where decisions are made, are

engaged in activities such as having planned or chaired a meeting, given a speech to a meeting or written a text. To be an *organizational activist* you will thus have to do more than attend a meeting.

To the degree that these organizational activists also are actively involved in public politics, they become a potential element of the society's linking social capital. However, only a potential element, for just as social networks can be seen to be more or less important for the generation of social capital dependent of the amount and the kind of trust they develop, the importance of state-civil society networks for linking social capital may also vary, dependent of the degree to which political integrative values such as political trust, civic norms and political efficacy are developed inside these networks. In other words, only so far organizational activists express integrative political values can they be seen to generate linking social capital.

It must be assumed that the institutional framing of state-civil society relations plays an important role both for the degree to which organizational activists become active in public and for the extent to which they express political integrative values, i.e. trust, norms and efficacy. If the formal and informal state-civil society relations are limited and marked by confrontation and conflict, as for instance was the case in the Weimar Republic (Berman, 1997), one can imagine that it will have a negative influence on such values. Opposite, if all interests are given fair consideration and if contacts are characterized by dialogue more than confrontation and perhaps even extended to more or less institutionalized forms of cooperation between the voluntary sector and the state sector based on a recognized work of division, it will possibly have a positive influence on the feelings of trust, norms and efficacy and thus strengthen the potential willingness of citizen-members to cooperate with political authorities in the future (Torpe, 2003). It is furthermore possible that one could see a positive spill over effect from linking social capital in this sense to bridging social capital in terms of social trust.

From the point of linking social capital two questions are therefore interesting in relation to voluntary associations. Firstly, what is the relative size of the group of organizational activists who are present in the political public? In particular, how much space does this group occupy of the public? Secondly can the group in this context be labelled "frontrunners" by possessing more political integrationist values and competences than comparable groups?

Our investigation is thus three folded:

- 1) To what extend are organizational activists also active in the political public, and how much space does this group occupy of the political public? How do different countries differ in that respect?
- 2) To what extend are organizational activist present in the political public more civic minded, have more trust in political institutions and are more political efficacious than comparable groups, and what are the differences between various countries?
- 3) Is linking social capital related to bridging social capital in terms of social trust?

is important for the willingness to cooperate along the verfor whether citizens decides to engage in public life or not (Verba et.al. 1995). Political efficacy can be seen as the subjective aspects of political empowerment (Goul Andersen, 2000), and whether citizens feel themselves empowered or powerless toward political decision-makers

In this context we will not look into memberships of such networks but look into

The definition includes two parts. A more general one: “the potential willingness to cooperate” and a more specific one: “engagement in civic endeavours”. With regard to the first one, for actors coming from voluntary associations the willingness to cooperate with the state can in a pragmatic way be seen as determined by what they think can be gained by such cooperation. Two main factors will influence this assessment, namely on the one hand resources and on the other motivation (Verba et.al., 1996). On the one hand *Resources* could be both organizational resources and individual resources. In this context we will only include individual resources understood as the perceived ability of individual actors to influence politicians and public authorities. This is also called political efficacy. *Motivation* is in this context seen firstly as “political trust”: How much

confidence do associational actors have in political institutions? Secondly it is seen as “civic norms”, i.e. the normative orientations of associational actors toward political institutions and public life.

With regard to “engagement in civic endeavours”, in terms of “bonding” and “bridging” social capital it can in itself be called a “civic endeavour” to be engaged in associations. In terms of linking social capital it means for associational actors to be engaged in common forums between the public and the private, also called the political public.